

Sandy Point

National Wildlife Refuge

photo: USFWS



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photo: Greg Hughes



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Refuge Facts

- Established: 1984.
- Acres: 327.
- Location: the refuge is located at the southwest end of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, just south of Frederiksted.
- Administered under Caribbean Island NWR office.

Natural History

- Sandy Point has the largest beach area in the Virgin Islands.
- It also hosts the largest nesting population of leatherback sea turtles (largest sea turtle in the world) under United States jurisdiction.
- The peninsula that forms the refuge has stable geologic formations, but the beach is highly dynamic.
- Plant diversity is low because of salt stress.

Financial Impact of Refuge

- One-person staff.
- 11,000 visitors annually.

Refuge Objectives

- To provide habitat and protection for threatened and endangered species, with particular emphasis on the leatherback sea turtle.
- To foster a sense of public commitment and understanding for sea turtles and the need for protection by providing opportunities for environmental education, interpretation, and compatible wildlife-oriented recreation.
- To support the Service's commitment to implement and carry out sea turtle recovery plans.
- To provide habitat for a natural diversity of plant and wildlife species.

Management Tools

- Law enforcement.
- Wildlife surveys.
- Environmental education.

Public Use Opportunities

Hiking, wildlife observation, and nature photography (the refuge is open 10:00 am-4:00 pm on Saturdays and Sundays, closed at all other times).

Calendar of Events

April-August: During the leatherback nesting season, Earthwatch volunteers assist with data collection and nest relocation (from erosion zones).

Questions and Answers

Is there any plan to increase staffing at the refuge to protect nesting leatherback sea turtles?

The refuge currently has one full-time manager. An additional permanent position and seasonal positions have been included in the President's 1999 proposed budget.

Is the refuge a good place for birdwatching?

Yes. Over 100 species have been recorded on the refuge, including the brown pelican, black-necked stilt and black-whiskered vireo.

Are any other national wildlife refuges close to Sandy Point?

Green Cay is an island refuge off the north coast of St. Croix; however, it is closed to the public due to fragile habitat and easily-disturbed wildlife.